

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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TAGS: EAIR BF

SUBJ: ESTABLISHMENT OF PRECLEARANCE UNIT AT FREEPORT

REF: NASSAU 1232; STATE 162948; NASSAU 1075

1. MR. WILLIAM BIERMANN, EASTERN AIRLINES DIRECTOR STATIONED IN NASSAU, AND MR. E. C. BALL, EASTERN'S DIRECTOR INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS STATIONED IN MIAMI, MET WITH AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS ABOVE SUBJECT. ESSENCE OF DISCUSSION WAS DESCRIPTION BY BALL OF MEETINGS HE HAS HAD WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF FREEPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AND PORT AUTHORITY RE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRECLEARANCE UNIT IN FREEPORT. WHILE DETAILED PLANS EXIST FOR NECESSARY PHYSICAL PLANT TO BE ESTABLISHED AT THE AIRPORT, OTHER DETAILS OF THE ARRANGEMENT ARE YET TO BE WORKED OUT. THESE DETAILS INCLUDE, MOST PROMINENTLY, WHO PAYS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FACILITY. NEVERTHELESS, BALL BELIEVES THAT WITHIN FOUR TO SIX MONTHS EASTERN WILL HAVE CONCLUDED DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER CARRIERS, WITH FREEPORT AUTHORITIES, AND WITH GCOB'S MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND WILL KNOW WHETHER OR NOT AN ADDITIONAL PRECLEARANCE UNIT FOR FREEPORT IS TO BE PROPOSED. THEY WOULD THEN, OF COURSE, ADVANCE SUCH A PROPOSAL FOR USG/GCOB NEGOTIATION.

2. IT IS CLEAR THAT EASTERN WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO ARRANGE ANOTHER PRECLEARANCE UNIT AT FREEPORT. THE IMPEDIMENTS TO DOING SO, AS DESCRIBED BY BALL, SOUND TO ME AS IF THEY ARE

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CAPABLE OF BEING WORKED OUT TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE VARIOUS

INTERESTED PARTIES DOWN HERE.

3. IF FOREGOING ESTIMATE IS CORRECT, USG WILL THEN HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER PROPOSAL CONSISTENT WITH ITS INTERESTS. AMONG THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE ANALYZED ARE THOSE RELATING TO PROVISION OF INS, CUSTOMS, AGRICULTURE AND STATE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL. THOUGH MY IMPRESSION IS THAT CUSTOMS, INS AND AGRICULTURE WERE NOT ORIGINALLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ESTABLISHING PRECLEARANCE IN THE BAHAMAS AND WHILE THERE CLEARLY HAVE BEEN SOME PROBLEMS IN CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE U.S. CONTROL THROUGH PRECLEARANCE ARRANGEMENT, GENERAL IMPRESSION I HAVE IS THAT THESE AGENCIES WOULD PROBABLY GO ALONG WITH PROPOSAL FOR AN ADDITIONAL PRECLEARANCE UNIT IN FREEPORT. AT LEAST THAT IS VIEW OF LOCAL CUSTOMS, INS AND AGRICULTURE PEOPLE BASED ON THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PARENT AGENCIES' VIEWS.

4. IF WE GET TO THIS POINT, DEPARTMENT WILL NEED TO FOCUS ON IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS. GIVEN EXPERIENCE WHICH WE HAVE HAD OVER THE LAST YEAR WITH PRECLEARANCE UNIT, IN MY VIEW IT WOULD BE A GREAT MISTAKE TO PERMIT ESTABLISHMENT OF ANOTHER UNIT IN FREEPORT WITHOUT AN ON-THE-SPOT STATE INVOLVEMENT. IN THE ABSENCE OF EMBASSY OVERVIEW, PROBLEMS BEARING ON USG/GCOB GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS EXTENDING ALL THE WAY TO INDIVIDUAL USG PERSONNEL PROBLEMS WHICH IMPACT DIRECTLY AND POTENTIALLY ON THOSE RELATIONS CANNOT BE CONTROLLED. PRECISELY WHAT THIS WOULD MEAN IN TERMS OF A PERMANENT STATE PRESENCE, I HAVE NOT DETERMINED. AT A MINIMUM IT WILL MEAN A SMALL OFFICE OF PERHAPS ONE PROFESSIONAL PLUS A SECRETARY. WHILE I WOULD NOT THINK THAT REQUIREMENTS STEMMING FROM FREEPORT WOULD BY THEMSELVES JUSTIFY ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSULATE, THERE CLEARLY IS ENOUGH OF INTEREST IN WHAT IS THE SECOND LARGEST CITY IN THE BAHAMAS TO PERMIT A CONSULAR OFFICER TO BE ACTIVELY EMPLOYED ON MATTERS OTHER THAN SOLELY PRECLEARANCE AFFAIRS. IN FACT, AS DEPARTMENT KNOWS, WE PERIODICALLY SEND EMBASSY OFFICERS TO FREEPORT TO CONDUCT BUSINESS. IN SHORT, ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRECLEARANCE UNIT WOULD REQUIRE A MINIMAL CONSULAR PRESENCE IN FREEPORT WHICH WOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO CONDUCT OTHER USEFUL BUSINESS.

5. IN ADDITION TO THE PROBLEMS OF ASSURING THAT ACTIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BY PRECLEARANCE PERSONNEL ARE CONSISTENT WITH OTHER USG INTERESTS IN THE BAHAMAS, THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW PRECLEARANCE UNIT WOULD PLACE AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN ON EMBASSY'S ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION. IF A CONSULATE OR CONSULAR AGENCY WERE ESTABLISHED IN FREEPORT, ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR A PRECLEARANCE UNIT COULD BE HANDLED THERE. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO WAY, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH SUPPORT COULD BE PROVIDED BY THE EMBASSY GIVEN ITS CURRENT STAFFING PATTERN.

6. WE CLEARLY ARE NOWHERE NEAR THE POINT IN TIME WHEN A DECISION NEEDS TO BE MADE EITHER WITH REGARD TO ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRECLEARANCE UNIT OR TO DEGREE OF STATE OVERVIEW WHICH THIS WOULD REQUIRE. EASTERN HAS AGREED TO KEEP US INFORMED AS THEIR DISCUSSIONS PROGRESS. NEVERTHELESS, DEPARTMENT SHOULD BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ESTABLISHING ANOTHER PRECLEARANCE UNIT AND ESPECIALLY IF IT FORESEES SERIOUS IMPEDIMENTS TO DOING SO SHOULD LET US KNOW SO THAT WE CAN MAKE APPROPRIATE DISCOURAGING SOUNDS TO EASTERN AND THE OTHER CARRIERS.

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